

EX PARTE OR LATE FILED

MB Docket 02-277  
01-235  
01-317  
00-244

Doris Weaver  
Communications Workers of America  
7004 Hickory Drive  
Raleigh, NC 27603  
919 662-7920

ORIGINAL

RECEIVED

APR - 9 2003

Federal Communications Commission  
Office of the Secretary

My name is Doris Weaver, I am with the Communications Workers of America, which represents BellSouth, AT&T, Avaya, Verizon, Sprint, Cingular, Alltel, Lucent, Waukesha Electric Systems, US Airways, Teamsters Clerks and Pyramid Printers which is over 14,000 working families in the state of North Carolina.

These working families depend upon a diverse and free media to participate in our democracy.

I'm worried about the concentration of media ownership into fewer and fewer hands.

Here in the Raleigh-Durham area, a metropolitan area of almost 1.2 million people, we have one major newspaper, the Raleigh News & Observer with weekday circulation of 164,000 and 200,000 on Sunday. This paper is owned by McClatchy, one of the large national chains. If you live in other cities in this area, you might read the Durham Herald-Sun or the Fayetteville Observer. These are independently owned newspapers. We are concerned that if the FCC

No. of Copies rec'd 01  
List A B C D E

relaxes the newspaper-broadcast rule, these independently-owned papers may be purchased by newspaper-broadcast chains that do not have roots in our local community and that local reporting will suffer.

We have three TV stations-the ABC, CBS, and NBC affiliates-which produce local news shows several times a day. In addition, the Fox and WB affiliates each produce a newscast. But the FOX affiliate, WRAZ-TV Channel 50, has the same owner as the CBS affiliate, WRAL-TV Channel 5. Both are owned by Capital Broadcasting.

We also have a cable news channel, News Channel 14 owned by Time Warner Cable, owner of the WB network.

So even though it appears at first blush that we have six different over-the-air news choices, only four are independently-owned. I also want to point out that Raleigh-Durham has three TV duopolies. Capital Broadcasting as I've already mentioned, plus Sinclair and Paxson, which each own two TV stations in our area. The expectation that television and the Internet would merge has not come to pass. In the U.S. approximately 50% of households do not have access to the Internet. Broadcast TV continues

to be the most used news and entertainment system, the basic fare most Americans watch most of the time. Cable TV channels appeal to niche fans, and the Internet serves as a supplement.

I'm particularly concerned about what has happened to radio in Raleigh-Durham since the 1996 Telecommunications Act dropped its national radio ownership rule. The four largest radio station owners now control 96 percent of the market, according to the FCC's own study. The number of independent radio station owners in Raleigh-Durham has dropped 26% since 1996, from 23 to 17.

I am really concerned about what would happen to our choices in news, information, and entertainment if the FCC relaxes its media ownership rules. We'd see a lot more mergers and maybe the purchase of our independently-owned smaller newspapers. A few large companies would dominate the news market and drive up ad prices. Working people have a hard enough time getting fair reporting in this state. If we had even fewer media owners, it would be harder. With higher ad rates, political candidates would have to spend even more money to get on the air.

This is not good for democracy. We need more, not fewer, media owners. I'm here to ask you to preserve the media ownership rules.

Thank you